

63rd Concert Series 2016-17



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is pleased to present

The St. Lawrence String Quartet

Geoff Nuttall, violin

Owen Dalby, violin

Lesley Robertson, viola

Christopher Costanza, cello

with guest artist

Anne-Marie McDermott, piano

Saturday, October 8, 2016

Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York



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Friends of Music Concerts, Inc. is an award-winning, non-profit, volunteer organization that brings to Westchester audiences world-renowned ensembles and distinguished younger musicians chosen from among the finest artists in today's diverse world of chamber music. Through our Partnership in Education program in public schools, and free admission to our six-concert season for those 18 years of age and under, we give young people throughout the county enhanced exposure to and appreciation of classical music, building audiences of the future.

We need additional helping hands to carry out our mission. Do consider joining the volunteers listed above. Call us at 914-861-5080 or contact us on our website (see below); we can discuss several specific areas in which assistance is needed.

Acknowledgments

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* as of September 26, 2016

Program

**String Quartet in E-flat Major,
Op. 33, No. 2 (“The Joke”)**

Franz Josef Haydn
(1732-1809)

Allegro moderato
Scherzo: Allegro
Largo e sostenuto
Finale: Presto

Quartet in E minor, Op. 44, No. 2

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

Allegro assai appassionato
Scherzo: Allegro di molto
Andante
Presto agitato

Intermission

Quintet for Piano and Strings in A Major, Op. 81

Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)

Allegro, ma non tanto
Dumka (Andante con moto-Vivace)
Scherzo (Furiant) (Molto vivace-pocotranquillo)
Finale (Allegro)

The St. Lawrence String Quartet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists.
www.davidroweartists.com.

St. Lawrence String recordings can be heard on EMI Classics and ArtistShare
(www.artistshare.com)

The St. Lawrence String Quartet is Ensemble-in-Residence at Stanford University. www.slsq.com.

Piano by Steinway

Next Concert

Saturday, October 22, 2016, 8:00 pm at Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York
Sang-Eun Lee, cello; Chris Jeon, piano.

Program: de Falla: Suite Populaire Espagnole for cello and piano; Cassadó: Suite for solo cello;
Schumann: Adagio and Allegro for cello and piano, Op. 70; Schubert: Sonata in A minor for
Arpeggione and Piano, Op. 821; Cassadó: Dance of the Green Devil.

Program notes

Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 33, No. 2 (“The Joke”)

Franz Josef Haydn

In music, what goes around comes around. Towards the end of 1781, Haydn kick-started a crowdfunding platform. There are to be six “entirely newly produced quartets,” he said in his pitch, “written in an entirely new special manner, for I have not composed any [quartets] for ten years.” In return for their pledges, backers (read ‘patrons’) would receive pre-publication manuscript copies and their names included in the list of subscribers in the printed edition. When published, the new quartets, combining accessibility with artistic excellence, immediately created a stir. Their popularity is reflected in the number of nicknames that have become attached to the collection (‘Russian’, or ‘Jungfernquartette’). Another nickname, ‘Gli Scherzi’ (Italian for “joke”), reflects the fact that Haydn adopts the newer, more folk-like scherzo, in place of the older, more stately minuet. The slow movements of Op. 33 are generally deeper and more complex in texture. And elements of popular folk music find their way into the finales. Mozart, just launching a career as a freelance composer in Vienna when the quartets were first published in 1782, admired their compactness, their perfect balance of character, form and technique, and the way in which Haydn gives all four instruments equal importance. He painstakingly composed a set of six in emulation of Haydn’s Op. 33, with several of Haydn’s movements clearly used as direct models.

The opening movement of Haydn’s **E-flat Major Quartet** is built rigorously on the good-natured rhythmic figure of its first few bars. Very little in the movement has to do with anything other than this thematic material. In the *Scherzo*, Haydn’s focus moves from high culture to folk culture, to accessibility and innovation. In it, Haydn makes the first documented use of the wavy line in a score to indicate that typically Viennese *glissando* (slide), famous shortly afterwards from the waltzes of the Strauss family and others. The mood swings again in the highly sophisticated variations of the slow movement, where a transparent, eight-measure melody is shared among the instruments in every possible permutation. The E-flat Quartet is often called ‘The Joke’ because of the witty ‘false ending’ of its presto finale. Here, in a touch of self-mockery, Haydn deconstructs the much-repeated theme, giving us the melody phrase by phrase, each separated by a measure of silence. Three more measures of silence and he now gives us the open phrase again, *pianissimo* – and with it, a good chuckle.

----notes by Keith Horner.

Quartet in E minor, Op. 44, No. 2

Felix Mendelssohn

The three quartets of Op. 44 are the centerpieces of Felix Mendelssohn's eight string quartets. He wrote them in the years 1837-38, starting composition at the age of 28, when his fame in the international music community was rapidly growing. The oratorio *St. Paul* had brought international success. He had directed the renowned Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig since 1835. Now, he traveled constantly among the important musical centers of Europe – conducting, advising major cultural and educational committees, composing commissions-to-order for the major festivals, and performing for the public and royalty of Europe. Family matters similarly came fast and furious with his wedding to Cécile Jeanrenaud in March 1837 and the birth of a son 12 months later. He began composition of the quartets during his honeymoon and published all three in 1839 as *Trois Grand Quatuors*, with a dedication to the Crown Prince of Sweden.

Op. 44 No. 2 opens with a sense of urgency, in Mendelssohn's favored key of E minor. Through the agitation, there is a touch of melancholy to the first violin theme. Its arching shape and syncopated accompaniment bear a strong resemblance to the opening of the violin concerto that Mendelssohn was to write in the same key and for the same violinist the following year. The tautly woven musical ideas of the movement balance the tension of the opening theme with the repose of its second theme. The fertility of invention carries over into a sparkling *Scherzo*. This is propelled by rhythmic vitality and constantly surprises us with the unexpected. At the same time, everything lies comfortably on the fingerboard – as in the Octet, this is music that is written for those who play, as well as for the instruments they play upon. Mendelssohn brings a violinist (and viola) player's inside knowledge to the interplay among the four instruments. "He never touched a string instrument the whole year round," the composer Ferdinand Hiller once said, "but, when he wanted to play, as with most things in life, he could do it." The slow movement is a bittersweet song-without-words, whose main melody sounds especially eloquent when it reappears on the cello. Any hint of sentimentality, a concern in some of Mendelssohn's music, is avoided with the composer's caution not to drag out (*nicht schleppend*) the movement. The finale again reveals great sophistication in the intricate way Mendelssohn handles *bravura* material, marrying musical craft with technical virtuosity.

--- notes by Keith Horner

Quintet for Piano and Strings in A Major, Op. 81

Antonín Dvořák

Chamber music had an important place in Dvořák's life; many of his earliest works were quartets and quintets, modeled after those of Beethoven and Schubert that he played with his colleagues and friends while developing his craft. In 1875 his discovery by Brahms resulted in the elder composer opening the way for the great career the younger was to have. Two years later, Dvořák wrote his mature and masterful **Piano Quintet in A Major, Op. 81** that, together with those of Brahms (Op. 34, 1864) and Schumann (Op. 44, 1842), forms a trilogy of quintet masterpieces. One of the finest works of Dvořák's fruitful years, this delightful music flows with joyous inspiration, brilliantly written for the instruments. It is gratifying to players and listeners alike.

Dvořák based the first movement, *Allegro ma non tanto*, on two beautiful Czech-flavored themes that contrast but are related musically in such a way that elements from them gracefully intermingle as the music develops. The second movement, *Andante con moto*, is a *dumka* modeled after the Slavonic folksong form that he uses in much of his best chamber music, generally slow and melancholy in character but sometimes introducing sudden changes of mood, as in this movement's *Vivace* section. Dvořák calls the third movement a *Scherzo* and *Furiant*, which is the name of the Czech folk dance to which it bears a distinct resemblance; we hear it now more as a lively, vigorous Schubertian waltz. The quintet ends with an *Allegro* Finale in which elegantly contrapuntal passages hardly slow the rise of the composer's high spirits to a jubilant close.

---notes by Susan Halpern

About the Artists

Established in Toronto in 1989, the **St. Lawrence String Quartet** quickly earned acclaim at top international chamber music competitions and soon was playing hundreds of concerts per year worldwide. They established an ongoing residency at Spoleto Festival USA, made prize-winning recordings for EMI of music by Schumann, Tchaikovsky, and Golijov, earning two Grammy nominations and a host of other prizes before being appointed ensemble-in-residence at Stanford University in 1999.

Highlights for the SLSQ this season include performances of John Adams's "Absolute Jest" for string quartet and orchestra with Gustavo Dudamel and the LA Philharmonic, and with Marin Alsop and the Baltimore Symphony, as well as the European premieres of Adams's second string quartet. In fact, the SLSQ's fruitful partnership with Adams, Jonathan Berger, Osvaldo Golijov and many others has yielded some of the finest additions to the quartet literature in recent years. Still, the quartet is especially dedicated to the music of Haydn; they are recording his groundbreaking set of six Op. 20 quartets in high-definition video for a free, universal release on line in 2017.

At Stanford, the SLSQ directs the music department's chamber music program, and frequently collaborates with other departments including the Schools of Law, Medicine, Business, and Education. The quartet performs regularly at Stanford Live, hosts an annual chamber music seminar, and runs the Emerging String Quartet Program through which they mentor the next generation of quartets.

Anne-Marie McDermott is a consummate artist who balances a versatile career as a soloist and collaborator, performing more than 100 concerts a year in a combination of solo recitals, concerti, and chamber music. In recent seasons she performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic, North Carolina Symphony, Charlotte Symphony, Huntsville Symphony, Alabama Symphony, San Diego Symphony, the Oregon Mozart Players, and the New Century Symphony Orchestra. Other recent engagements have included the 92nd Street Y, Alice Tully Hall, Town Hall, The Schubert Club, Kennedy Center, as well as universities across the country. She has curated and performed in a number of intense projects including: the Complete Prokofiev Piano Sonatas and Chamber Music, a Three-Concert Series of Shostakovich Chamber Music, as well as a recital series of Haydn and Beethoven Piano Sonatas. Most recently she commissioned works of Charles Wuorinen and Clarice Assad, which were premiered in May 2009 at Town Hall in conjunction with Bach's Goldberg Variations.

Anne-Marie McDermott has been named the Artistic Director of the famed Vail Valley Music Festival in Colorado, which hosts the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia, and the Dallas Symphony in addition to presenting more than 40 chamber music concerts throughout the summer. She also is Artistic Director of two new Festivals: The Ocean Reef Chamber Music Festival in Key Largo, FL, and the Avila Chamber Music Celebration in Curaçao.

As a chamber music performer, Anne-Marie McDermott was named an artist member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in 1995, and performs and tours extensively with CMS each season. She continues a long-standing collaboration with the highly acclaimed violinist Nadia Salerno Sonnenberg, is a member of the renowned piano quartet, Opus One, with colleagues Ida Kavafian, Steven Tenenbom and Peter Wiley, and continues to perform each season with her sisters, Maureen McDermott and Kerry McDermott, in the McDermott Trio.

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